

PROTECT SENIORS IN HEALTH CARE REFORM

By Congressman Jerry Moran

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The debate over health care reform legislation continues to churn along in Congress. The tide of this debate changes with the wind and no one knows for certain when or if there will be a vote on a bill. The one thing that must be certain with health care reform, however, is that Kansas seniors must be protected and their access to health care must be preserved and enhanced.

Congress must preserve Medicare and protect the 45 million seniors across the country that depend on the program for their health care needs. On July 21, I introduced H. Res. 663, legislation urging the House of Representatives to invest Medicare savings back into the program instead of funding new government-sponsored health care programs. We need to bring some Kansas common-sense thinking to health care reform. Recent projections report Medicare to be bankrupt by 2017. Additionally, the Medicare trustees recently reported that the “unfunded liability” of Medicare, or amount of benefits promised that are not covered by taxes, is nearly \$38 trillion over the next 75 years. It makes no sense to siphon money from a cash-strapped program that seniors rely on to expand government and create a brand new government program. This logic will only exacerbate the health care access issues we have in Kansas.

House Democrats would like to overhaul our health care system by creating a massive new government-sponsored health care program that would be funded through \$820 billion in taxes and \$500 billion in cuts to Medicare. Our hospitals and other care facilities in Kansas already operate on razor-thin margins because they serve an increasingly aging population across a wide geographic area and receive a Medicare reimbursement level at or below cost. Reducing reimbursements in this manner, at the same time that Baby Boomers increase Medicare enrollment by 30%, will mean fewer providers and diminished health care access for Kansans.

With the staggering shortfall facing Medicare, spending our "savings" will reduce the care our seniors currently receive by cutting critical health services and limiting care options in Kansas. Medicare cuts are more than just numbers on a budget forecast. These resources determine whether Kansas seniors receive the care they need. Medicare represents a promise made by the federal government to the American people, and we should be working to fulfill this promise and not diverting funds away from this responsibility.

I will continue working to find a better way to improve the choices we have for affordable and available health care in Kansas.

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